Once a year, **the Fulani nomads of the Wodaabe tribe** gather in Niger and Chad to celebrate a festival known as **Guerewol**, an ancient courtship ritual.

The **Wodaabe** are a small isolated branch of the Fulani ethnic group and are considered by wild tribes as wild people since they are nomadic shepherds who make migratory journeys through the arid regions of Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Chad and of the Central African Republic, traveling with their families and their livestock.

The Fulani of the Wodaabe tribe **are very attentive to their beauty and charm**; the concept of beauty in fact plays an important role in the culture of this population, for this reason men devote large amounts of time, money and efforts to make themselves beautiful in the eyes of women.

Gerewol Festival

Gerewol is the most important ceremony that is celebrated by the Wodaabe; during this ritual men compete against one another to be chosen by young women of marriage age, the festival is always held at the end of the rainy season in the Sahelian area, usually in late September even if the exact period not only changes every year, but sometimes it is difficult to know in advance.

The beauty ideal of the Wodaabe wants men to be tall, have straight noses and white teeth, also the eyes are very important; therefore, during the celebration of Gerewol, men often roll their eyes and show their teeth to emphasize these characteristics.

Men paint themselves and make up using a range of colored paints: they paint their faces with red clay, use a kind of eyeliner to make their eyes appear whiter and use a dark tint on the lips that makes their teeth appear brighter; they also **wear very brightly decorated clothes**, embellished by brighter beads, feathers and buttons and wear **white ostrich feathers in their hair** to appear taller.

The long tunics and large feathered hats add other elements that help to highlight their beauty.

The dances

Dances are the main element of the festival, the most important dance is the Yaake; during this dance women evaluate men, their appearance, their charm and their dancing skills are considered.

The dances go on for several days, usually men dance in the cooler hours of the day, dancing from the evening until dawn.

Dancing all this time is also a test of strength and endurance; to face this test, the guys drink an energized fermented drink, obtained with the milk and bark of a plant that also seems to give a hallucinogenic effect.

During this festival a tribal market is also set up where incredible camel races are held.

Participating in Gerewol is a unique and unforgettable experience, it is possible to assist both in **Niger** and in **Chad**, from time to time we decide the best option; contact us to find out the exact dates of the festival and the travel costs.

